

Basiliscus, brother to the empress, on his sister's representation of his former meritorious exploits against the Scythians. He landed his troops at Cape Bona, about 40 miles from Carthage; the army of Heraclius, and the fleet of Marcellinus either joined or seconded Basiliscus, and the Vandals were successively vanquished, with the utmost consternation.

The Vandal king perceived his danger, and now offered to submit both his person and dominions to the will of the emperor. But a truce of five days was requested to settle the terms of his submission; and by his secret liberality he obtained his request. Basiliscus rested on this transfaction in an imprudent security, which the remembrance of the affair of Carthagena might have given cause at least to doubt, by considering himself as the conqueror of Africa; but the wind, which shifted in favour of the designs of Genseric, induced him to man his largest ships of war with the most intrepid Moors and Vandals, who towed after them large barks that had been filled with combustible materials. These were impelled by the wind, in the dead of night, against the unsuspecting fleet of the Romans, and the most dreadful confusion ensued. They were awakened to the sense of instant danger, or certain destruction; and the flames advanced rapidly from the close order in which they were obliged to be crowded. Nothing but the most dreadful cries were heard; the noise of the wind, and the crackling of the flames, produced the most horrible tumult.

Great were the exertions of such parts of this navy, to which the fire-ships had not yet communicated the destructive blaze, to detach them from the rest; though the gallies assaulted them with the utmost valour to prevent the success. Many of the Romans who escaped the fury of the flames, were thereby destroyed or taken by the victorious Vandals. Yet the commander Basiliscus, whose station was farthest remote from danger, detached himself in the beginning of the engagement, and disgracefully returned to Constantinople with the loss of more than half of his fleet and army. When Heraclius found that the ill-judged lenity of the commander had been productive of such fatal consequences, and that if any of the fleet had escaped the conflagration they had retreated, and might, perhaps, be buried in the waves; there was no resource but that of retiring through the desert, by which he had arrived in the neighbourhood of Carthage, and Marcellinus consequently returned to Sicily, where he was soon after murdered by one of his own captains.

By this success, Genseric was left at liberty to renew his ravages on the coasts of Italy, Greece, and Asia, which were consequently

consequently exposed to his avarice and revenge. Tripoli and Sardinia returned to his obedience; and he also made a conquest of Sicily. Before his death, which was in the fulness of years and of glory, he beheld the final extinction of the empire of the West.

ABOUT this time Arvandus, the Praetorian praefect in Gaul, was tried and condemned. The Roman senate recalled him from a situation, where he was become intolerable, to give an account of his conduct; the last act of jurisdiction which they exercised in that province before its final separation from the empire. Exasperated at the opposition of some, and deluded by the flattery of others, he lost his popularity; his importunate creditors compelled him to impoverish the province to satisfy them, and his insolence and caprice were productive of a general odium amongst their nobles. The deputies of Gaul, which were sent to make good their accusations, pursued him closely to Rome; amongst many other crimes which they laid to his charge, that of treason was one, which they had discovered in an intercepted letter, and on its being read in full senate, on his avowal of the contents, he was declared guilty of a capital offence against the empire. Whilst he was in prison, waiting for the decisive sentence, the emperor Anthemius relented; he spared his life, and declared the punishment of exile and confiscation, but through the treachery and persevering enmity of Seronatus, his condemnation and death soon after followed, through the means of Ricimer.

ANTHEMIUS, on discovering this baseness of Ricimer, who had retired to Milan, was excited to prepare for a severe revenge; which for the present was appeased, and a civil war prevented, by the embassy of Epiphanius, bishop of Pavia. But the sincerity of such a reconciliation might well be doubted; for whilst this clemency of the emperor was procured only as an effect of his weakness, Ricimer only suspended his ambitious designs, till he had more effectually prepared the means of overturning the throne of Anthemius, when the mask was thrown off. Having greatly reinforced his army by the Burgundians and other neighbouring powers, he disavowed all allegiance to the Greek emperor, and immediately marched from Milan to the gates of Rome.

THE senator Olybrius, by marrying Placidia, the younger daughter of Valentinian, after her return from Carthage, had the best title of inheritance to the western empire. Genseric supported his pretensions, and he landed in Italy, where he was received as the sovereign of the western world, when Ricimer already possessed two parts of Rome. The senators, on this occasion, were divided, and a dreadful conflict ensued

sued, in which Anthemius ignominiously perished ; rapine and murder were every where predominant, and the city was entirely demolished by the fury of the contending factions. In about 40 days after Ricimer was taken off by disease, leaving the command of his army to his nephew Gundobald, a prince of Burgundy. Olybrius died in about seven months from his landing in Italy, and about two months after Ricimer, leaving only one daughter, from whom the family of the great Theodosius continued at Constantinople in the female line to the eighth generation.

JULIUS NEPOS, who had married the Niece of Verina, the empress of Leo, was, after much delay, appointed emperor of the west. But an army was necessary to support his authority ; and before his arrival Glycerius, an obscure soldier, had been patronised by Gundobald. The latter was, however, indisposed to maintain his appointment by a civil war, and a compromise took place, which induced him to resign his pretensions ; upon which Nepos was acknowledged emperor by the senate and Roman people and the provincials of Gaul. His reign was short and inglorious ; and a furious sedition of barbarian confederates, conducted by Orestes, marched from Rome towards Ravenna, which he forsook immediately, and retired to Dalmatia, of which he was sovereign, having succeeded his uncle Marcellinus in that principality. Here he continued about five years, when he was slain by the ungrateful Glycerius, soon after translated to the archbishopric of Milan.

UNDER the name of the barbarian confederates, were included the Heruli, the Scyrris, the Alani, the Turcilingi, and Rugians ; and Orestes, their general, was the son of Tatullus in Pannonia, who had fought under Attila, when that province was surrendered to the Huns, whose ambassador also he had after been to the Imperial court at Constantinople. On the death of Attila, he preferred the service of the Italian princes, successors of Valentinian, advancing in military dignity till he was made patrician and master-general of the troops by Nepos. But he declined to accept the Imperial throne, notwithstanding their desires to that purpose ; yet consented that his son Augustulus should succeed to the title of emperor of the West.

BUT the difficulties which had hitherto beset the empire still increased. Orestes soon found that the sovereign of Italy must either be the slave or the victim of the barbarian mercenaries ; by whose dangerous alliance, the last remains of Roman freedom and dignity had been oppressed and insulted, whose pay had been augmented by every successive revolution, and

and whose insolence had increased in proportion with their privileges. They saw the success of their brethren in Gaul, Spain, and Africa, whose victorious arms had acquired them an independent inheritance; they looked forward to the same object, and now peremptorily demanded a third part of the lands of Italy, which Orestes determined resolutely to resist, rather than subscribe to the certain and irrecoverable ruin of an innocent people.

This refusal incited Odoacer, a bold barbarian, to step forward; who assured them that, if they dared to associate under his command, he would soon forcibly obtain what had been denied. All the confederate barbarians flocked to his standard, which the unfortunate Patrician was unable to withstand; and, fleeing to the strong city of Pavia, he was there immediately besieged, when the fortifications were stormed and the town pillaged, nor could the tumult be appeased but by the execution of Orestes. The helpless Augustulus, who could no longer command the respect, was hereupon reduced to implore the compassion of Odoacer.

He was the youngest of the two sons of Edecon, who had frequently been employed as ambassador by Attila, and had also been the colleague of Orestes. When their state had been reduced by the failure of the Huns, in their unequal contest with the Ostrogoths, and in which Edecon had lost his life, Odoacer was admitted into the service of the Roman empire, and soon obtained an honourable rank in the guards: and having thus established his character among the confederates of Italy, they were easily induced to flock to his standard as their general. He was saluted with the title of king, but would never accept the purple and diadem during his whole reign of fourteen years; so that royalty was now entirely abolished, as Augustulus had been made the instrument of his own disgrace, in signifying his resignation to the senate, an assembly which still affected, in their last act of obedience to a Roman prince, the spirit of freedom and the forms of the constitution.

NOTWITHSTANDING the prudence and success of Odoacer, his kingdom manifested the sad prospect of misery and desolation. From the reign of Tiberius, the Italians had seen the decay of agriculture; and the very subsistence of the Roman people depended on the tributary harvests of Africa and Egypt, which had been gradually withdrawn, by succeeding revolutions. A decrease of population was a natural consequence; and the scourges of war, famine, and pestilence, which had so repeatedly overtaken them, had desolated the country. Pope Gelasius, who lived about this time, has recorded

corded that the human species was almost extirpated in Æmilia, Tuscany, and the adjoining provinces; and the plebeians of Rome depended on their masters for food, and either perished or disappeared when that liberality was withheld.

Thus in the person of Odoacer, the very name of emperor of the West was extinct; the government of which he maintained about fourteen years. From this time we may date its final dissolution, which was about 146 years after the removal of the Imperial residence to Constantinople, 476 after the common Æra of the nativity of Christ, and 1228, from its first foundation by Romulus.



F I N I S.